

SPIDER-MAN

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MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

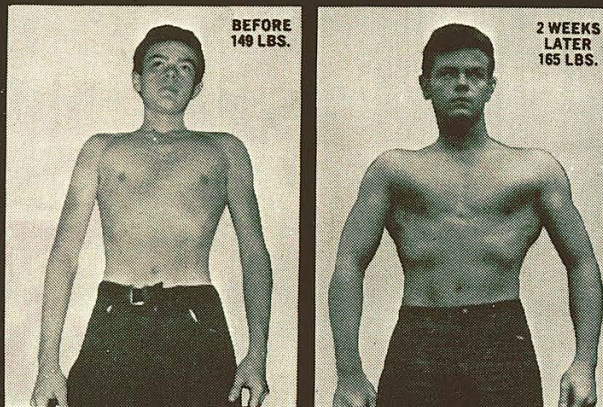
THE
GOBLIN'S
POWER!

LOSING YOUR
GRIP,
SPIDER-MAN?

IT **HAD**
TO HAPPEN..
I **PLANNED**
IT THIS WAY!

Another JOE WEIDER breakthrough:

THE END OF THE SKINNY BODY.



GAINS UP TO 16 POUNDS IN 14 DAYS—

adds 2 1/4" to each arm, 2 1/4" to his chest!

Walter Leno of Burlington, Vt. reported these fantastic gains in 14 days! Gains 16 pounds, added 2 1/4" to each arm, 2 1/4" to his chest, 1 1/2" to each leg. See what a fresher, more exciting fun-going body he now has—thanks to Crash Weight Formula #7. He says, "All I did was follow the plan and drink a few small glasses of delicious Crash Weight Formula #7—and the improvement I made in just 14 days was beyond my wildest dreams!" Shouldn't this happen to you?

Nobody likes a bag of bones

Flesh out your bones. Fill out your narrow, shallow chest. Your skinny arms. And spindly legs. Here's a totally new breed of nutritional "wildcat" drink that's guaranteed to put an end to your muscle-starved, hungry-looking body. Joe Weider's Crash-Weight Formula #7 is a new scientifically-blended milkshake-flavored drink that lets you drink on as much as up to 14 pounds in 14 days the easy, the delicious, the relaxed way. Just drink 4 zestful glasses of Crash-Weight natural organic with your regular meals and take in up to 3500 extra calories a day. (It's the calories that count when you want to put on some handsome weight!) And Crash-Weight does all the work for you. Piling on the pounds and the weight as the days go by. Check the plan you want in the coupon.

Guaranteed to put weight on you and create a new—fresher—more exciting fun-going you or money back!

The Do-It-Yourself Gain-A-Pound-A-Day Kit

This is a 1 day supply of Crash Weight, chock full of weight-gaining nutrients that can smash the weight-gaining barrier! You want to gain a pound a day? Half a pound a day? Maybe you just want to add a few pounds here and there? You want it easy—enjoyably—without stuffing yourself with heavy-as-lead foods. Now you can. It's as simple as drinking a delicious milkshake.



FREE:

Weight-Gaining and Muscle-Building Course. This 48 page illustrated Guide sent FREE with each Crash Weight Formula #7 Kit. Crammed with step-by-step instructions in muscle-building and weight-gaining basics. Filled with all the latest ideas and how to adapt them for your own personal, fun-going weight gains!



Fill in this Gain-A-Pound-A-Day-or-Your-Money-Back Guarantee Coupon

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4800 Chestnut Ave. 108
533 12nd St., Union City, N.J. 07087

Dear Joe:

I want to put an end to my skinny body and have everyone compliment me on my athletic appearance and muscular gains. Rush me the "pound-a-day" Crash-Weight Formula #7 package I have checked below.

Check Plan & Flavor Desired:

☐ 7-Day Supply... \$ 7.50 ☐ Chocolate
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If it doesn't work, I want my money back. OK?

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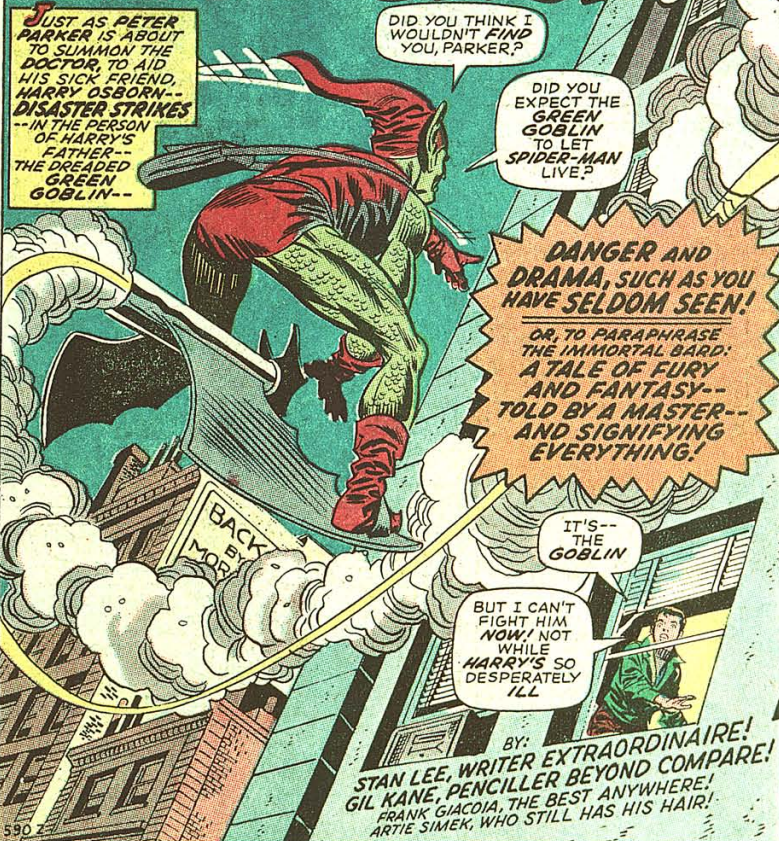
	APD or FPD	N.Y. or S.F.
CRASH-WEIGHT (7-Day)	.80	\$1.75
CRASH-WEIGHT (14-Day)	1.10	2.75

SERVICEMEN: TO SPEED YOUR ORDER, U. S. Regulations require that shipments to service men be prepaid — Please add indicated amount as required by your APD or FPD address.

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THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!

THE GOBLIN'S LAST GASP!



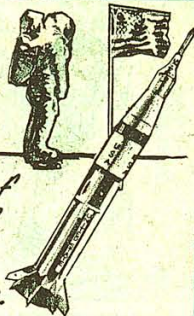
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CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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IT WORKED! HE'S GONE

BUT I'LL WORRY ABOUT HIM LATER--

RIGHT NOW, MY FIRST JOB IS TO GET HARRY TO A HOSPITAL

THEN, WITHIN A MATTER OF MINUTES--

EEEEEE

I GUESS I'VE--DONE ALL I CAN FOR HIM

THERE'S JUST ONE THING IN HIS FAVOR--

--AS FAR AS I KNOW, THAT WAS HIS FIRST, HIS ONLY TRIP

I JUST HOPE THEY GOT TO HIM--IN TIME

HOSPITAL

HE MIGHT NEVER HAVE GOTTEN INTO THAT SCENE--IF NOT FOR THE WAY MARY JANE TREATED HIM

I GUESS HE WAS JUST TOO WEAK--TO COPE WITH--REJECTION

IT'S FUNNY HOW LOVING A GIRL CAN DRIVE A GUY BANANAS

AND, I GUESS NONE OF US ARE ESCAPE-PRC OF

NO MATTER HOW I TRY--I CAN'T GET GWENDY OUT OF MY MIND

I CAN'T STOP THINKING OF HER--THERE ACROSS THE OCEAN--IN LONDON

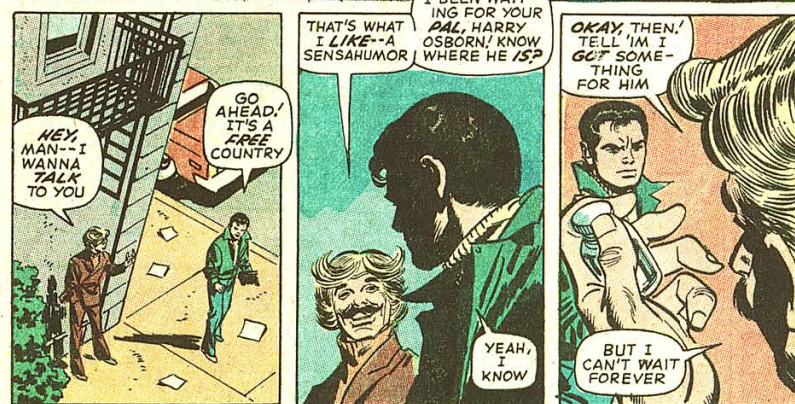
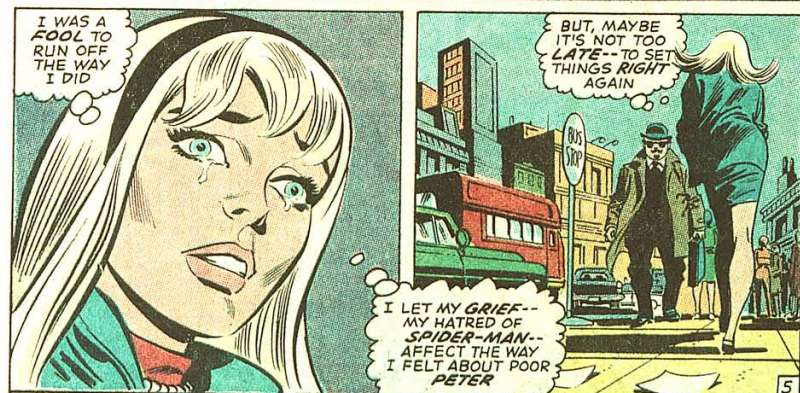
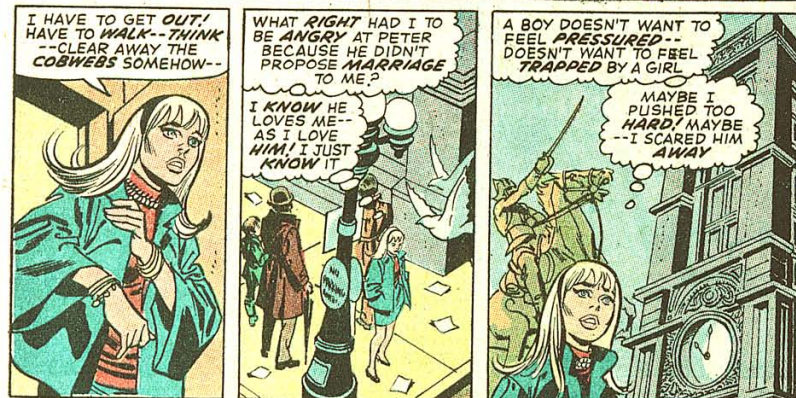
CAN'T STOP WONDERING --IF SHE'S THINKING OF ME

PETER HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING--BUT LOOK HOW EASILY WE CAN FIND OUT--

IT'S NO USE! I JUST CAN'T FORGET HIM

I THOUGHT--BEING AN OCEAN AWAY--WOULD GIVE ME A NEW OUTLOOK; BUT, IT DOESN'T MATTER

I STILL MISS PETER AS MUCH AS EVER



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST Now on Sale

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SUB-MARINER #39: No super-villain in this one, gang! No monster from outer space — or alien dimension! Namor simply takes on the whole U.S. Army — in the heart of the teeming city!

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AMAZING ADVENTURES #7: The uncanny Inhumans face a hostile humanity — while it looks as if Black Bolt's out to destroy a whole city! Plus — the Black Widow gets it all together!

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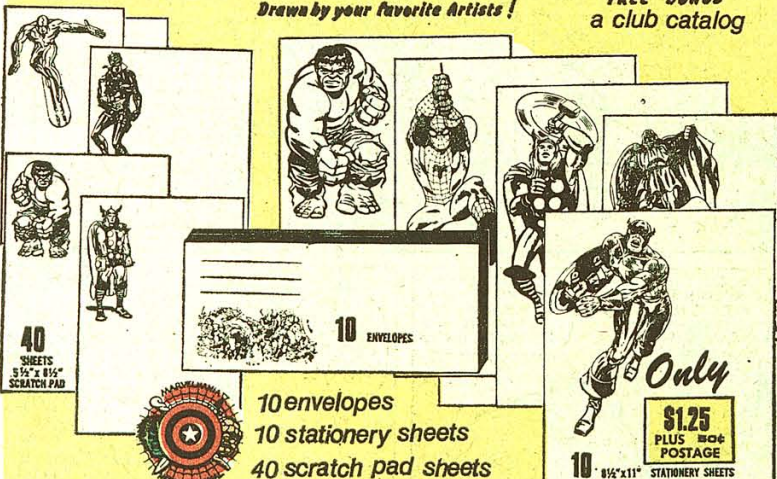
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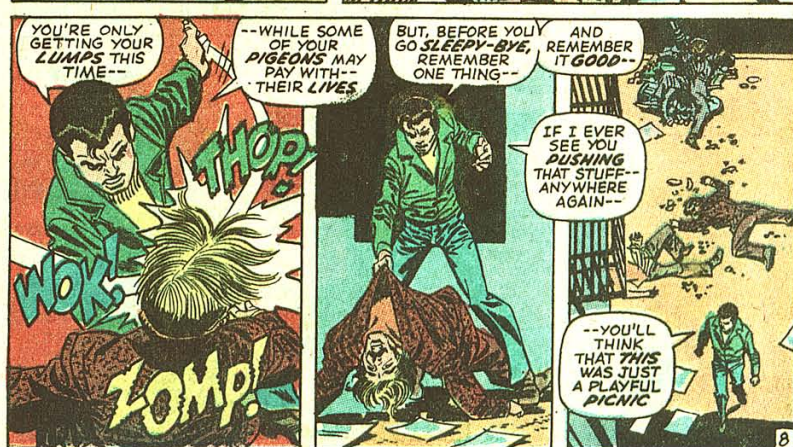
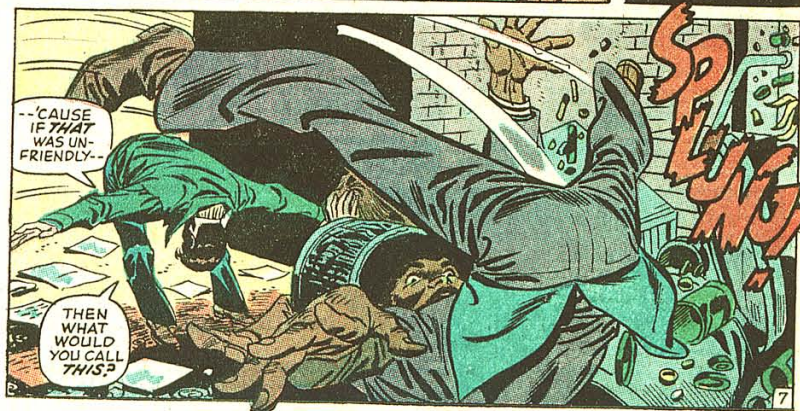
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YOU NEVER SQUASHED A STORY *BEFORE* BECAUSE IT MIGHT LOSE YOU SOME *ADS*

SIMMER DOWN, I'M NOT DOING IT NOW EITHER

I JUST WANNA TALK; THAT'S ALL

HOW WILL YOU *RUN* THE STORY? WHAT *ANGLE* WILL YOU USE?

I'M SHOWING THAT DRUGS AREN'T JUST A *GHETTO* HANGUP! THEY HIT THE *RICH* -- SAME AS THE POOR

IT'S *EVERYONE'S* PROBLEM! WE'VE ALL GOT TO FACE IT

WELL, DON'T JUST *STAND* THERE, MAN! I WANT IT IN THE *NEXT* EDITION

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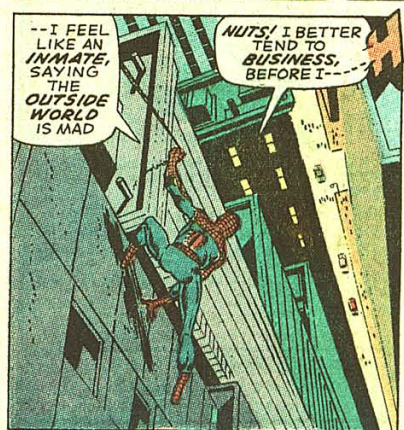
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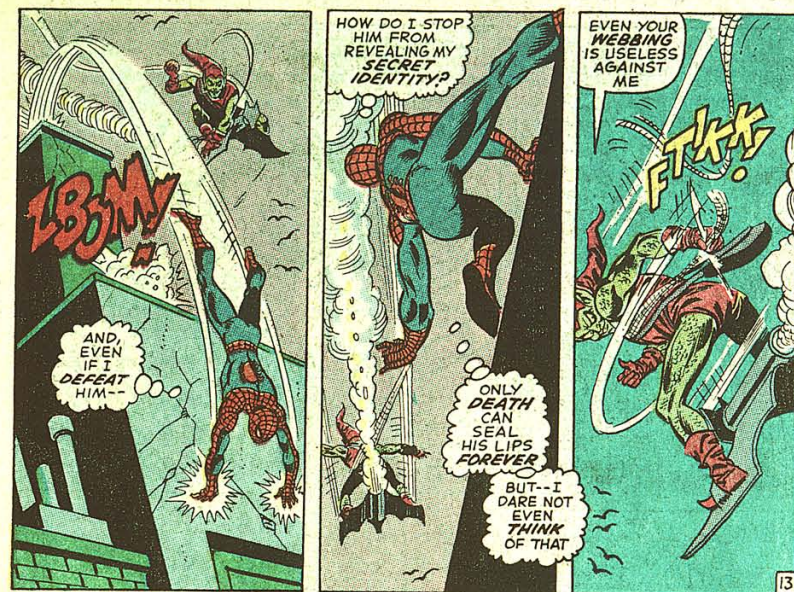
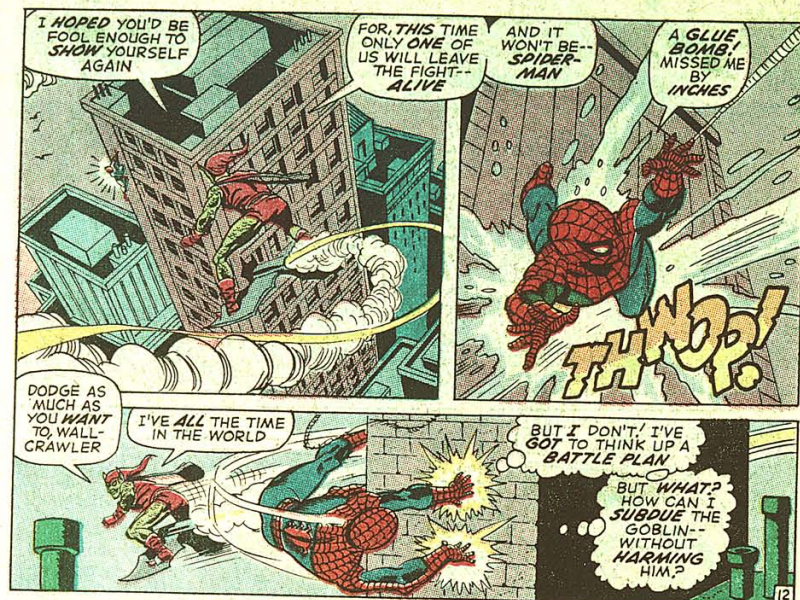
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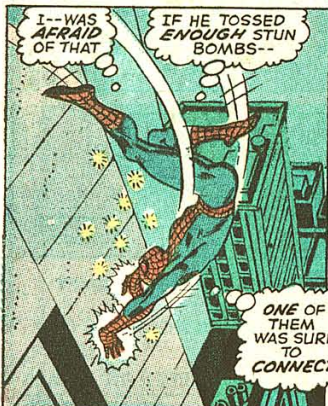
THIS IS REALLY ONE FOR THE BOOKS--

I'M WORRIED ABOUT HURTING HIM-- 'CAUSE HE'S HARRY'S DAD BUT THE ONE I'M WORRIED ABOUT MAY POLISH SPIDEY OFF--FOR GOOD



UNNNHHH!

THWOP



I--WAS AFRAID OF THAT

IF HE TOSSED ENOUGH STUN BOMBS--

ONE OF THEM WAS SURE TO CONNECT



HAH! NOW-- BEFORE YOU CAN RECOVER--

I'VE GOT YOU WHERE I WANT YOU

ANOTHER BOMB--BUT A DIFFERENT KIND



IT'S--SOME SORT OF MIST--COVERING MY BODY--SOAKING THRU MY COSTUME--

BUT WHY? FOR WHAT PURPOSE? IT--DOESN'T SEEM TO BE--HARMING ME



IF THAT WAS HIS NEW SECRET WEAPON--FORGET IT

ALL IT DID WAS GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CATCH MY BREATH



NO! OH, NO!



SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO ME

I--I CAN'T STICK TO THE WALLS ANY MORE



BUT--I STILL HAVE--MY STRENGTH

I CAN STILL CATCH HOLD OF THINGS--AS I FALL

AND NOW-- IF I CAN JUST WEB HIM IN TIME--



HERE HE COMES! ALL I'VE GOTTA DO IS--

IT DOESN'T WORK! THE WEB-SHOOTER'S EMPTY!



WORRIED, SPIDER-MAN?

IF YOU'RE NOT--YOU SHOULD BE

BECAUSE YOUR TIME HAS JUST RUN OUT

THAT MUST BE IT! THAT'S WHAT HIS BOMB DID

I WAS A FOOL NOT TO SUSPECT

SHOP BY MAIL

DON'T BE FAT
INTRODUCTORY OFFER
Good for a short time only!
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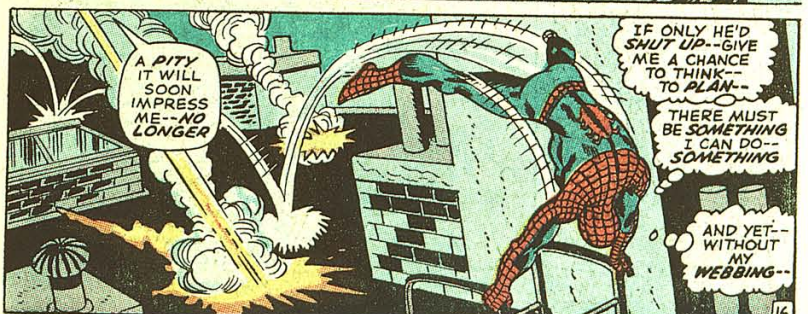
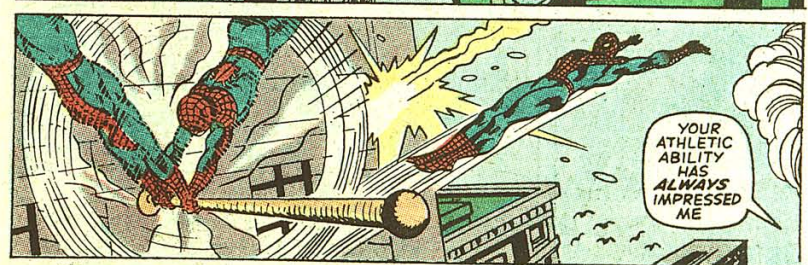
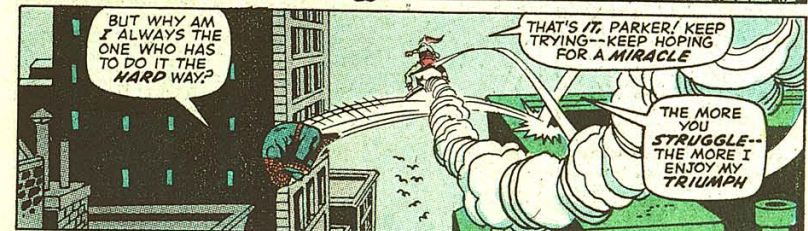
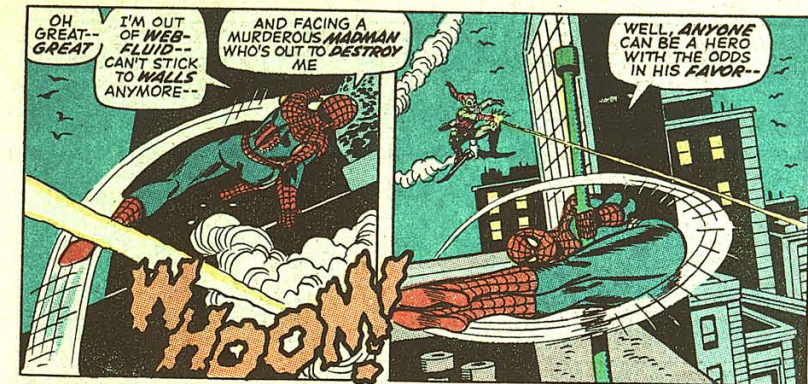
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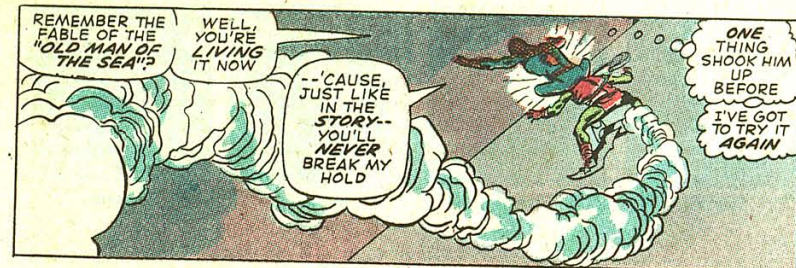
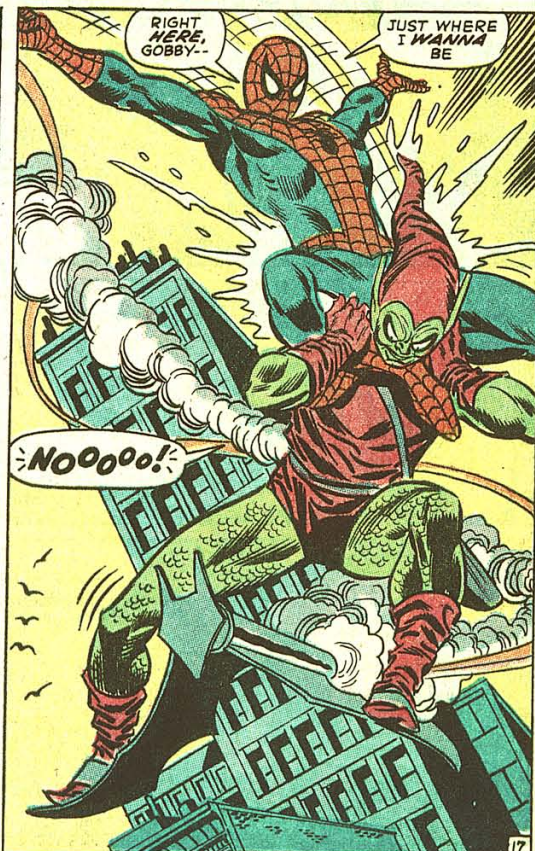
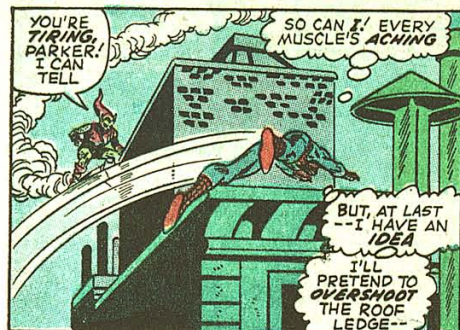
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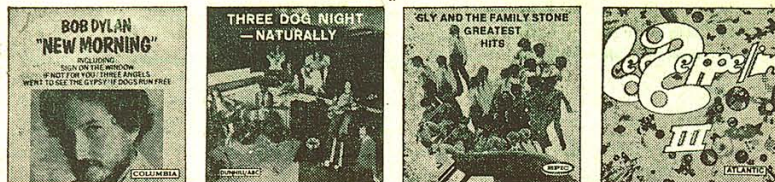
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Now... save almost 50% on
the hit records you want!

Savings are off regular Club prices



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185876

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188060

190974

195685

189704

179291

187690



194563

172411

196733

196790

196808

195818

177311



959908

172254

188581

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193805



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196444

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ANY 12 HIT RECORDS \$2.86
FOR ONLY

plus mailing and handling

if you join the Club now and agree to purchase just ten records during the coming two years (you will have up to 300 records a month to choose from)



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191825

195487

186197

195701

193623

185017



191205

195719

191742

195404

194605

191460

YES, IT'S TRUE—if you join the Columbia Record Club now, you may have ANY 12 of these records for only \$2.86. And all you have to do is agree to buy as few as ten records (at the regular Club price) during the coming two years.

That's right—you'll have two full years in which to buy your ten records. After doing so, you'll have acquired 22 records—but you'll have paid for just half of them... that's practically a 50% saving off regular Club prices!

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RECORDS SENT ON CREDIT. Upon enrollment, the Club will open a charge account in your name... you pay for your records only after you have received them. They will be mailed and billed to you at the regular Club price of \$4.98 (Classical and occasional special albums somewhat higher), plus a mailing and handling charge.

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☐ Mr.
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(Please Print) First Name Initial Last Name

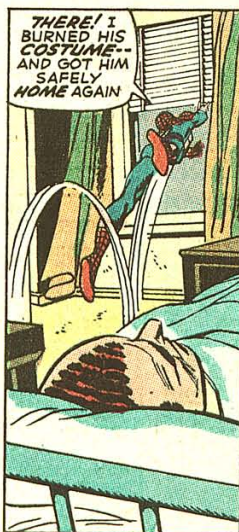
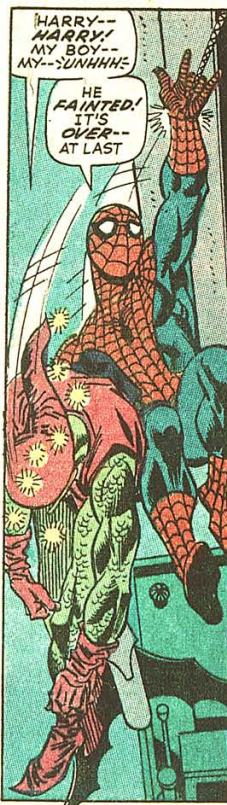
Address.....

City.....

State..... Zip.....

Do You Have A Telephone? (Check One) ☐ YES ☐ NO
APO, FPO addresses: write for special offer

N22-2/6Z



FUNKY FACTS AND FREAKY FABLES, FROM THE FICKLE FINGER OF FORBUSH!

ITEM! Don't miss the big changes among our swingin' superheroes! What big changes? We hoped you'd ask. For example, CAPTAIN AMERICA starts a new life this month! What happens to the Thing shouldn't happen to a Yancy Streeter as he battles the Hulk in FANTASTIC FOUR #121 SAVAGE TALES (Our M-rated mag—for the mature reader) looks like such a howlin' hit, that we're following it up with a ghoulish 50¢ goodie called THE TOMB OF DRACULA. (Or THE HOUSE OF DRACULA. We haven't decided yet.) It's a wholly new concept, starring Dracula himself, as he is—and as he will be. With art by GENE COLAN, BERNI WRIGHTSON, and GRAY MORROW among others, and a team of the world's most titanic scribes, headed by Marvel's merry masters, SMILIN' STAN and RASCALLY ROY themselves! May we modestly say—it ain't to be missed! AS FOR SAVAGE TALES #2, we've corralled art by BARRY SMITH, JOHNNY BUSCEMA, GENE COLAN, NEAL ADAMS, and GRAY MORROW! And, a separate wondrous writer for each strip. Five great artists, five great authors, each creatively involved in trying to produce the type of illustrated thriller he himself would want to read!

ITEM! In answer to countless requests (that means we haven't had time to count 'em yet) from their DR. STRANGE team-up days, GENE COLAN and TOM PALMER are together again, as the regular art team in the ever-dynamic DARE DEVIL series!

ITEM! Remember us telling you there was a clue to the identity of Infinity (appearing in the now-classic THOR series), in a previous FANTASTIC FOUR ish? Well, the clue was this—our F.F. villain, Janus, was one man, representing both good and evil. Now, if you'll remember who Infinity really was (from THOR #188), you'll get the connection. (End of not-so-subtle double plug!)

ITEM! If you're wondering what happened to TOWER OF SHADOWS and CHAMBER OF DARKNESS, they're now titled MONSTERS ON THE PROWL and CREATURES ON THE LOOSE. And, if you wanna know why—so do we!

ITEM! Congratulations Department! How about TOM (PEERLESS) PALMER becoming the dazzled daddy of his very first child, a beautiful baby girl! And OUR PAL SAL BUSCEMA just welcomed his second incomparable image—a bouncing baby boy! Right on, gang!

ITEM! Hey, did everybody over 16 see "THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP," with Peter Sellers and Goldie Hawn? No, we haven't turned into movie critics, but how about the fact that someone in the cast must be a rabid Marvel fan, 'cause there's a gigantic HULK poster on one wall of a pad which someone keeps sneaking into the shot! And there's the CAPTAIN AMERICA mag which was being read by a stalwart in blue during one of the more symbolic scenes in

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Face it—you can't win! A few years ago, at the request of hundreds of fans, we eliminated most of the dialogue balloons and captions from our cataclysmic covers. As you might imagine, this made those same hundreds of fans ecstatically happy out there in the far-reaching vastness of Marveldom Assembled. But (natch)—there's always a but!—no sooner were our covers virtually word-and-balloonless, then we received an equal amount of indignant letters from other fans, threatening us with all the fearsome fates of Forbushdom if we didn't start jazzing our mags up again with lots of copy on the covers! Finally, being the easily-intimidated idiots that we are, we reverted back to the original format and tried to concentrate on our yarns once more. But did they let us? Hoo hah! We're now getting just as many letters as we did the first time, but—with a difference! Now, we're being told that the addition of copy and captions makes our mildly-majestic mags look a bit juvenile. And that's the one critique that confuses us. (Not that we're hard to confuse!) You see, we've been studying other mags—those that are definitely not printed solely for the bubble-gum brigade. Reader mags such as PLAYBOY, VARIETY'S DIGEST, LIFE, LOOK, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, etc. Now then—each and every one of 'em is often lavishly endowed with captions, blurbs, and cover copy of every sort. Therefore, sympathetic Sybarite, my question is this—why do so many frantic fans feel that a lot of copy on the cover gives a comic-mag a juvenile look? (Sure, we can come up with a zillion answers ourselves—but we happen to have a few rusty no-prizes left over, and so—). Send your most scholarly, sage, and scintillating answers to STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX, 625 Madison Ave., NYC NY 10022. It may not do a thing for either of us, but think how impressed our mailman's gonna be!

Onward!

Stan

"BREWSTER McCLOUD"! So, our thanks to filmdom's fearless film-makers for spreading the faith, and holding ever-higher the burgeoning banners of Marvel Eternal!

ITEM! And, speaking of show biz, those of you watching KFSV-TV in Cape Girardeau, in the famous five-state area of S.E. Missouri, weren't imagining things when you thought you saw POW THOMAS rambling about relevance in the comics. The Rascally One was visiting his parents' home in Missouri, and since we all know how the TV titans are tuned-in to

Marvel, he ended up doing a 20-minute bit in his Brooks Brothers suit and tie, overlapped by his long blond hair—which must have totally confused everyone who was watching!

ITEM! DARLIN' DICK AYERS will soon be pencilling one of Marvel's top superhero stanzas. We won't tell you which one it is yet, but how many characters do you know who have green skin? Wait'll you see it—it'll flap your ears! But don't worry about HAPPY HERBIE TRIMPE—we've got a few sensational projects mapped out for his magic pencil—and we'll tell you about 'em later on—when we're sure the competition isn't looking! But, in the meantime, we aren't forget to tell you that LONESOME GEORGE TUSKA will soon be doing two, count 'em two, monthly mags for musician Marvel! Which ones? Look around and see, omnipotent one. (We love to generate as much action as possible at your neighborhood newsstand!)

ITEM! We thought you'd like to know the ACADEMY OF COMIC BOOK ARTS' nominations for 1970. We've just room to tell you that, in the dramatic category, the nominees for Best Penciller are: ADAMS, BUSCEMA, KIRBY. Best Inker: GIORDANO, PALMER, SINNOTT. Best Writer: LEE, O'NEIL, THOMAS. Best Continuing Feature: AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR, GREEN LANTERN, SPIDER-MAN. Outstanding New Talent: CONWAY, SMITH, WRIGHTSON. We'll tip you off to the voting results in a few months, when ACBA's has its Annual Awards Ceremony. By the way—our thanks to LOVABLE LENNIE PRICE, the courtly comedian who entertained at ACBA's last meeting, rolling the gang in the aisles with his rib-tickling routines based upon our crazy comics industry. Oh, and before we forget—any of you who are interested in becoming a SUSTAINING MEMBER of the Academy, can get further information by writing to the ACADEMY OF COMIC BOOK ARTS, 509 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. (Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for all the dizzy details.)

ITEM! Just wanna tell you that we're nothing left to tell you! Excelsior!

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ITEM! Just wanna tell you that we're nothing left to tell you! Excelsior!

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THE SPIDERS' WEB

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:

THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP, SECOND FLOOR 625 MADISON AV., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Dear Stan and John,

I want to raise an issue of general policy on which Marveldom Assembled must be allowed to vote. I contend that you have overdone the soap opera bit for way too long, and that your heroes, especially Spider-Man, must be allowed a little more happiness in their private lives. I realize that unhappiness is "realism," and that into every life a little rain must fall; but the quantity of rain that has been pouring into the lives of New York's finest makes Ragnarok look like a Spring shower. As I write this, Peter and Gwen are on different sides of the ocean; Matt and Karen on different sides of the continent; Bruce Banner is hopelessly Hulkified and there are dark hints that Betty Ross has flipped out; Captain America can't even get Sharon to speak to him and Janice Cord is dead. Presumably, there's a happily married couple at the Baxter Building, but who can find it, what with Johnny's loss of Crystal and the terrifying personality of the new Thing? What's worse, heroes all over are developing the Spider-Man neurosis, and are questioning whether they wouldn't have been better off selling shoes. Daredevil smashes mirrors, Tony Stark has nightmares, and Captain America wastes whole issues whining about how he's not with it.

Enough! This unabated misery has to stop, and the place to start is Spider-Man. I've been waiting for eight years for Peter Parker to confide in his girlfriend. You've developed the character of Gwen—beautiful, affectionate, witty, fun, responsible—so that those of us who identify with Peter can't bear the thought of losing her. And now you're going through the same long, drawn-out process by which Betty Brant broke up with Peter from the phone, feverish unmasking, through the murdered relative, to the long journey. Well, to hell with your carefully laid plans and your desire not to give the fans too much of what you already gave them with Daredevil! I can't wait another eight years! Peter has to confide his secret to Gwen. If she's so wonderful and understanding, she'll be wonderful and understand. Give us just a year of happiness, if that's all you can spare, and then start in with the disasters again; but I need some relief, and I need it now! Till the Watcher takes No-Doz and Galactus burps, make mine regrettably Marvel.

Joel Schultz, 22 Magazine St.
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

We don't know quite how reassuring we can be, Joel, when we say that we don't think it would be in Pete or Gwen's best interests for Spidey's identity to be revealed, BUT here's a promising sign! At the end of this ish, as you've already seen for yourself, we do have a happy ending. Or perhaps it would be more true to call it a happy beginning, since Stan agrees that it's been awhile since a smile has passed Pete's somber lips!

Dear Stan,
"Yecchi!"

That's what I said as I threw down my SPIDER-MAN #94 in disgust. It was no doubt one of the worst SPIDEY strips in quite a while.

First, there were many typical flaws. You know the type—just like the one on page 16, panel 2, in which Spidey says, "If only she hadn't gone for that milk just then." But, Spidey never knew that she went to the store to get milk. This sort of thing, however, I can overlook, since comic-books are filled with them. But, looking at the rest of the story—

More than nine full pages showed Spidey reshaping his problems. This, to me, was a total waste, as it probably was to many of your readers. The remaining pages were done well, considering the major flaw in the plot—this fault being Aunt May's not dying. For Aunt May not to die, with her weak heart, was under the circumstances, terribly unrealistic. I think that "ugh!" would be an adequate word to describe my feelings towards this bit of unreality.

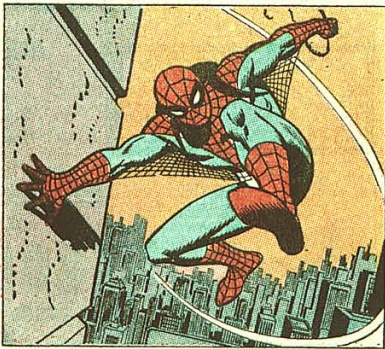
Aunt May has been around now for 94 full issues of Spidey, and from the very beginning she has been unhealthy... and yet, she still hasn't died. I, for one, would think it truly fitting if she died of natural causes in her sleep. I think that a death of this sort would be very realistic and, above all, a happy change from the terribly dramatic deaths that constantly occur in comic books. After all, everyone dies sooner or later... and she should have died five years ago! Quite frankly, I'm beginning to believe that she's immortal!

Getting back to issue #94, I was quite unhappy about the artwork. I've never been an admirer of Mr. Romita's work [I've been what you would call a member of the tolerable minority]. Sal Buscema, however, is entirely unsuited to ink John Romita's pencils. Buscema's use of blacks, coupled with the dismal coloring job, made the mag look quite muddy.

Guess that's it for now.

Dave Krasakove, 83 Irma Ave.
Port Washington, N.Y. 11050

Sorry that you feel so skeptical about ish #94, Dave, but we hope by now that we've redeemed ourselves in your eyes with the superb pencils of the great Gil Kane. (Not that the resourceful Mr. Romita really needs any defending!) As far as poor old Aunt May goes, we don't think her time is quite here, and we're not the type to rush those things along just for the sake of "clearing out dead wood." And anyway, we don't think that one death after another in the same book would thrill too many of our readers—after all, most everyone's still shaking their heads in disbelief over Capt. Stacy! (At least, ol' Smiley is!)



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F.F.F. (Fearless Front-Facer)—An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

Dear Mr. Lee,

Whoever it was that said lightning never strikes the same place twice was a fool. It is a well-known fact that in nature, two different bolts of lightning often strike the same spot. It is also known, now, that in the make-believe world of Marvel Comics, it is possible for the same ground to be struck twice, over a period of years, by the same single bolt. Just look here, you'll see...

Does anyone out there remember an old strip called SPIDER-MAN? Let me tell you about it, if I may. As I recall it first hit the stands eight or nine years ago, and soon developed into a tremendously popular comic. A very original strip, it mixed (with considerable success) genuinely amusing humor, lively fluid action scenes (compliments of one Steve Ditko, who now, for some reason, seems a lot more talented than he did then) and in-depth character development and relationship. At the time, compared to the pantheon of paper-thin characters presented to the comic-book audience, Spider-Man looked pretty good. In fact, he was pretty good.

Because Spider-Man's gimmick, you see, was problems. Original, because no other super-heroes had problems. But more than that, Spider-Man's gimmick managed to be more than just new, and even more than just a gimmick. What it boiled down to, if you can believe it, was that Spider-Man's gimmick, his problems, made him just like us. That's right. He was Marvel's Everyman, the guy off the street. Sure. All comics fans wondered what it would be like to be Captain Marvel or Superman; well, here is what it would be like: Spider-Man showed us. And he not only showed us what it would be like to be super-human, but also, to our profound astonishment, he pointed out that being super-human could be lousy. It had its drawbacks. Newspaper publishers hounded you, mobs jeered at you, villains beat the hell out of you, and the pay was intolerable, if it existed at all. And worse, your powers gave you delusions of grandeur; you felt that you could do anything; stop crimes, save lives, help people. This was bad, because it brought about the inevitable discovery that your physical prowess was limited by your ability to figure out how to use it. Your human fallibility tripped you up, and now since you were a superman, on a higher plane than you used to be, you fell further and harder when you tripped.

Yes, despite the exotic, fantastic nature of the Spider-Man strip, it carried in it a germ of truth. It was good. Take a look for yourself...

Remember Betty Brant? She was Spider-Man's original lead. Back in those days, the female lead was usually an obnoxious scatterbrain who spent all her time trying to discover the hero's secret identity. But Betty was different, the first of a new breed (a breed which, unfortunately, has suffered a population explosion since then). She was in love with Peter Parker, the quiet-spoken honor student, and she detested the violent, swaggering Spider-Man (and, realistically, she never suspected that the two were one and the same). This conflict between Peter, Betty, and S-M was symbolic of the whole strip: Peter desperately attempting to live a normal life beneath the shadow of his other identity. There were problems, but ones that flowed logically from the interplay of personalities previously established. We know that Betty hates violence before she hates Spider-Man. When her brother is killed (violently, because of his human weakness, greed) she lays the blame at Spider-Man's door. S-M became the target of all her vitriolic pacifism. Peter, confused and horrified at being loved and loathed by the same girl, is immobilized and baffled. Eventually in his bewilderment at the whole affair, he drives Betty from him and from the strip. When she returns, months later, she is like a stranger to him. Problems, problems.

But, like real life problems, these troubles, this whole situation, evolved from human causes: Betty's fear of violence, her brother's greed, Spider-Man's commitment to forcibly conquering crime, Peter's inability to cope with a complex situation. The crises is resolved in a negative way when Betty leaves Peter, on action that hits him like a bolt of lightning.

That was 1965. Now, in 1970, lightning, the same bolt of lightning, strikes again. Look...

Captain George Stacy, saving a child's life, is killed. His daughter, Gwen, blames Spider-Man for the old man's death. Peter, in love with Gwen, doesn't know how to reconcile her hate for

S-M and her affection for him (Peter). And? And so Gwen literally flies off (to England). Peter is left sulking.

Bang. The lightning bolt has hit again. For five years, since the dropping of Betty and the introduction of Gwen, we have been travelling in a colossal circle, heading in a straight line away from one crisis, yet, by an equally straight line, racing back toward that crisis. Congratulations, Mr. Lee. For what it's worth, you have created the world's first cyclical comic book. We are back where we started five years ago. Nothing has been accomplished.

Indeed, if anything, this new-old plot twist has had a detrimental effect. You see, the first time you gave us this story line, with Betty, the characters were clearly drawn. Rather than the characters reacting to external problems, the problems rose from the characters. All this has changed.

Spider-Man's new world is one in which nothing and no one make any sense. Bricks fall on Captain Stacy for no reason. Gwen pins blame on S-M for no reason. You have never established that the girl harbored any hostility for the character. It is too sudden, her hate; too arbitrary a thing to be rational. He has, after all, lived through this situation before. If he says nothing to Gwen, if he makes no moves, he will lose her. So what does he do? Plays Hamlet, procrastinates. When he moves finally, he is too late. The dope. You expect us to have any respect for you, after the way you dish out this mangled rehashing of a fine old plot?

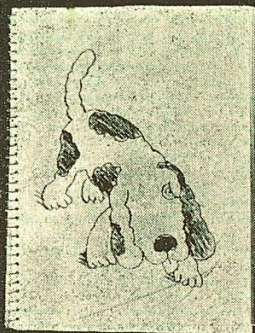
Apparently, the once-original gimmick has grown to be a Frankenstein's monster. Problems have become an end in themselves. It no longer is necessary for them to stem from discernable causes; if no longer matters that the problems have become meaningless and wholly unavoidable; just as long as Peter is miserable, you sell magazines. What we are left with is the one thing that the strip never was: soap-opera. Soap-opera, and an idiot here. He wonders what to do next all the time. He threatens, annually, to quit the super-hero racket. But he finds, inevitably, endlessly, that he cannot quit, that he has a moral responsibility to himself to continue being Spider-Man. He discovers this over and over a couple times a year. Like his cyclical love life, this soul-searching rakes down just what weariness after a while. The gimmick has broken down. Just "problems" are no longer enough. You need new problems, new challenges. You must either switch over to a straight-action-mystery-Batman type of thing, or develop new ideas for your old format.

Because one thing is sure: you can't possibly go on like you are now and expect to be called a quality comic book. Spider-Man has been imprisoned in the same rut, the same basic story line, for years. He needs to get out. His strength was always in change and innovation. If he insists upon playing up the out-of-costume-hero as much as his in-costume alter ego, then you must give the out-of-costume-hero something to do. You cannot keep on circling the same plot and yet, that is exactly what you will do as long as Spider-Man is single, a college student, and in love with a girl (any girl—you can change the name and face ad infinitum, but you will always wind up with the same old result). You have taken that format as far as it will go. Now either it will change or your audience will change. I for one have no intention of reading stories that, like the Worm Ouroboros, inevitably circle back on themselves, reaching the same old points of crisis as before. Who wants the same bolt of lightning visited upon them every few years?

Tom Steinke, 87 Udalua Court
West Islip, New York 11795

Very few letters shake up Our Leader the way yours did, Tom, particularly because of the clever parallel you drew between past and present—a parallel which Stan did not intend to create. Our lives are cyclical in many ways because an individual has the tendency to react the same way to the same stimulus. Peter's situation, rather than a cop-out, is the necessary result of Being Spider-Man. But, as you can see from the climax of this ish, Stan does not plan to have Gwen and her relationship with Pete become a remake of the Betty Brant situation. Hang in there, faithful one. The future is yet to come!





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